

February 26, 2008

Honorable Sandra Armstrong,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I am writing this letter on behalf of my mother, father, sister, and brother in-law. Our purpose is to seek mercy on behalf of Rafael Miranda. We would like to ask you to please consider three areas in Rafael's life that perhaps may allow you to look beyond the charges he faces and has agreed to in accepting the plea agreement.

First, we would ask you to please consider his relationship with his ex-football coach and co-accused (Thomas Williams), how it evolved throughout the years and finally culminated with the events of their arrest this past summer.

Your Honor, no one wielded more influence in Rafa's life than Thom did during his formative junior high and high school years—an influence that drove Rafael to reciprocate with a grossly misplaced loyalty.

Thom's influence on Rafa began at an early age (late grade school years—fifth and sixth grades) as he would play on the sidelines of the football field waiting for my sister and I to finish our respective after-school sport-related activities.

As soon as Rafa moved-up to junior high, Thom took a special interest in him—allowing him to red-shirt, as a ninth-grader, for the varsity football team. This would serve as the catalyst for their relationship to flourish. During the next three years no one had more one-on-one time with him than Thom; as he not only coached him but drove him home after practices and invited him to his house for so-called coaching sessions.

Shortly after Rafa's tenth-grade year Thom got arrested for armed robbery. The school quickly moved to hide his criminal past—ensuring the parents he was being falsely

accused. After such assurances from the school leadership, my parents supported him financially, assisting in shouldering some of the attorney's fees.

The trial ended in an acquittal, in no small part due to the leadership Rafa demonstrated in rallying the team and other students to attend every single day of a lengthy trial in support of their coach. After the trial, Thom's attorneys credited Rafa with playing a crucial role in swaying the jury based on the close coach-player bond demonstrated during the ordeal.

After the trial, Thom's relationship with my brother only grew stronger. However, after graduation, Rafa moved to Europe to study abroad and his relationship with Thom ended due to other interests and opportunities in his life. It was not until about three years ago that through a chance encounter their relationship started again. Shortly thereafter, Thom asked Rafa to cash some stolen payroll checks for him and when Rafa refused Thom became infuriated accusing him, among other things, of being a coward. Rafa simply walked away baffled by the offer—we talked about it and agreed to just let it go.

A few months ago, after another chance encounter, Thom came back into his life making amends and their relationship started again. By this time Thom was having serious financial problems and began to ask Rafa for money. Shortly thereafter, Thom had a heart-attack—an event that was not enough for even those closest to him, his family, to help him financially. And so Rafa, against the advice of people close to him, stepped-up to the plate to help him. Shortly after this, we get a call that he has been arrested with Thom.

Your Honor, we (his family) do not excuse Rafa's actions. The offense he is accused of is very serious. But I hope that you can see (even considering the events that unfolded post-arrest where Thom not only leaned on Rafa—playing a victim and accusing him of being the mastermind but going so far as to asking him, on a trip to court, to come up with 35K to tell the authorities how it all really happened) that Rafa was not only not the mastermind but was being influenced by a man twice his age who took advantage of him

financially in the months leading to this event through a long-ago established a hard-to-break coach-player bond.

Your Honor, I hope that through this short letter we were able transmit to you some of the events in this relationship that led to where we are today. It is certainly not an attempt to smear Thom—his record and his actions speak louder than anything we may be able to say about him.

As for Rafael, well he should have known better and looked for a way out. Why Rafa lacked the emotional fortitude he displayed in walking away as he had done so previously is something that we do not understand. However, as previously stated, Thom has wielded tremendous influence on him and he, in-turn has reciprocated with a seriously misplaced loyalty.

Second, Your Honor, we would ask you to consider his behavior while detained in prison for the last eight months or so. While, without argument, he is expected to behave and obey the rules set forth by the institution, Rafa's behavior has been exemplary.

He has had up to three jobs at the same time—one of which is administrative in nature. He has assisted other inmates with their school work. He has worked diligently and hard at the jobs he has had which has allowed him to maintain a good relationship with the guards that supervise him.

Your Honor, these are traits one does not develop out-of-the-blue but rather are imbedded in one's character—particularly if these traits are sustained for a period of time. Rafa's behavior has certainly exemplified this and thus is a strong indicator of his character.

Lastly, Your Honor, please consider Rafa's conduct and life before his incarceration and his legal status in the United States.

On one hand, Rafa has always been a hard working individual and a productive member of this society. While the pain that we go through day-by-day is suffocating, his arrest has affected a number of people outside his family—mainly friends. For over six months, Rafa had been fully supporting a U.S. Iraq Vet. providing for school, room and board, food, and spending money. In another instance he was paying the child-support of a friend because he had fallen on hard times. And like this there are a several other examples of his generosity toward others.

On the other hand, Rafa came to this country when he was about four or five years of age and this is, well, his home. While it is long overdue that we, as a family, initiate the transition from Permanent Legal Residents to United States Citizens, Rafa's conviction would preclude him of doing so. The offense he committed brings with it collateral consequences as he faces permanent deportation, to a country that even though is geographically next door is nonetheless a strange land, which means he will forever be away from our family.

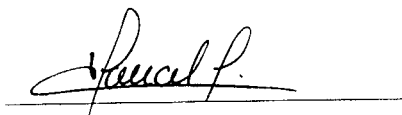
Your Honor, it is difficult to put into words, as you may already know due to the nature of your profession, how much pain this event has brought to our family. All kinds of questions constantly linger in our minds as to the events that long-ago served to lay the foundation that led to this event. Things that once brought joy to our family no longer do... The French poet and statesman Alphonse De Lamartine said it best when he wrote; "sometimes, when one person is missing, the whole world seems depopulated."

Your Honor, if there is a way that Rafael can pay his debt to society, other than with a sentence that would all but guarantee deportation, he would certainly accept it. He has asked his attorney to look into the possibility of serving in the Armed Forces as a way to pay for his debt. His Pastor, Donald Hamer has also asked the court for the opportunity of probation under his supervision.

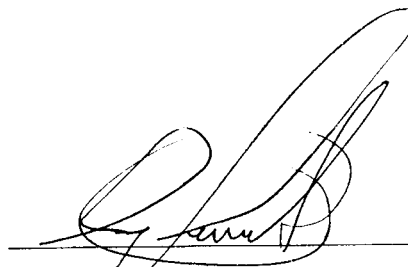
Your Honor, Rafael would not disappoint the court if he was to receive mercy. He is a big hearted individual with a promising life that made a terrible, terrible mistake that threatens to derail what he has long worked for in life.

Your Honor, thank you for taking the time to read our letter.

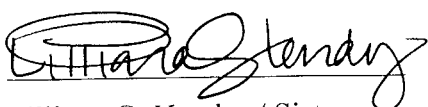
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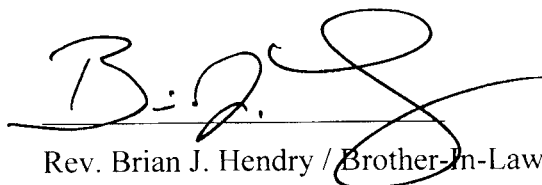
Mercedes Poucel / Mother



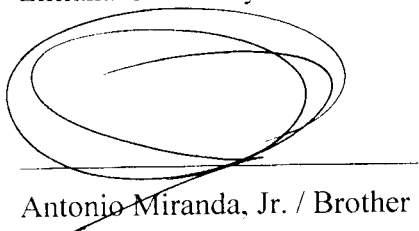
Antonio Miranda, Sr. / Father



Lilliana G. Hendry / Sister



Rev. Brian J. Hendry / Brother-in-Law



Antonio Miranda, Jr. / Brother